Excerpts from book *Women Soldiers in the American Civil War* Regarding Albert Cashier of Saunemin, Illinois

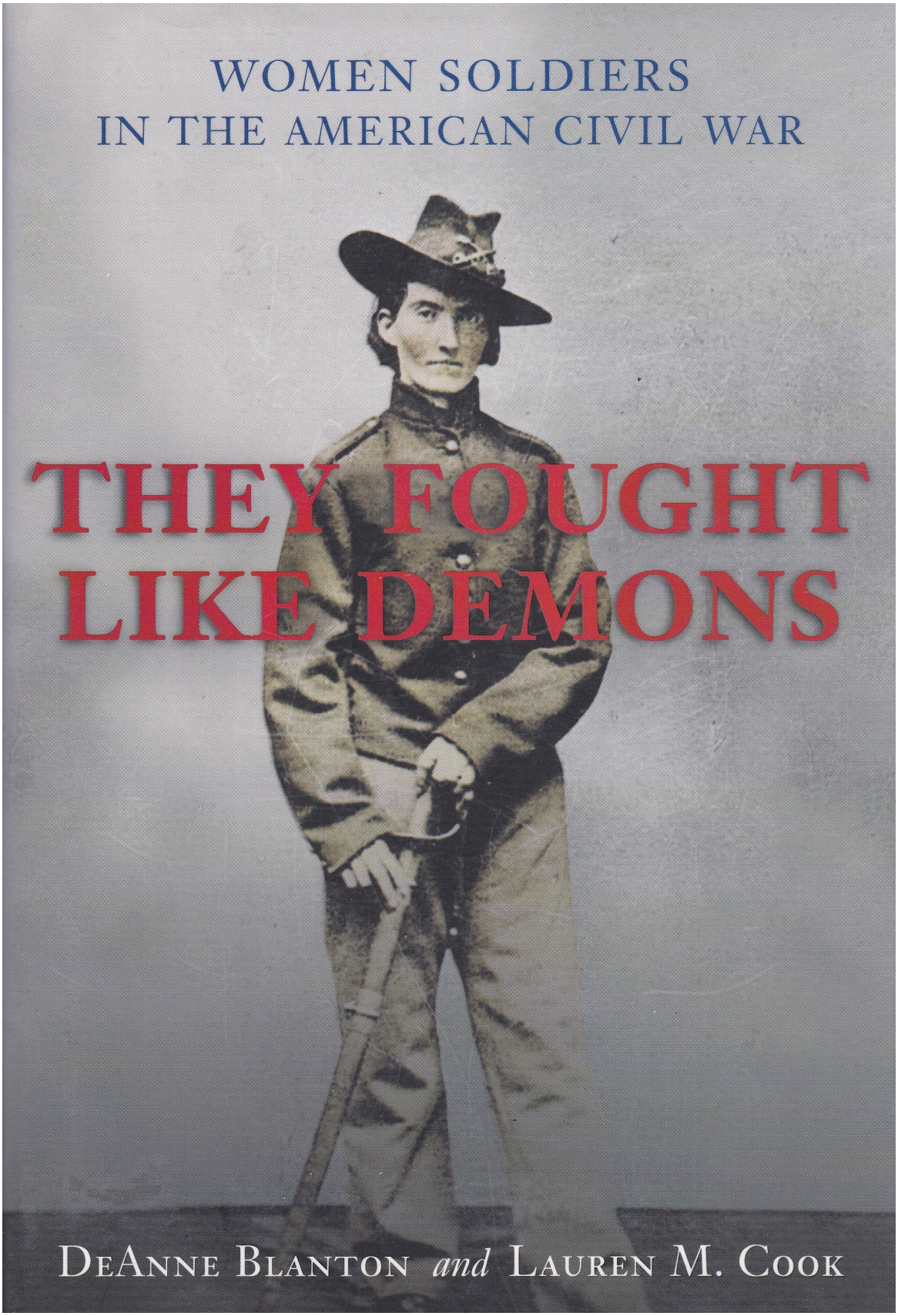
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WOMEN SOLDIERS
IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR



THEY FOUGHT LIKE DEMONS

DeAnne Blanton *and* Lauren M. Cook

Book Index

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During the three days of fighting that began on July 1, approximately 7,000 soldiers were killed in action, and more than 33,000 were wounded. While the Union women at Gettysburg emerged from the carnage relatively intact, the Confederate women, like the army in which they served, fared badly. One of the Confederate soldiers was shot in the leg and captured. She was removed to the U.S. Military Hospital in Chester, Pennsylvania, where surgeons amputated her leg in order to save her life.[25]

The two other Confederate women were casualties of Pickett's Charge on July 3. One historian called the charge "the most renowned infantry assault of Anglo-Saxon history." Nine brigades of Confederate soldiers attacked the center of the Union line, mistakenly believing it weakened after two hours of artillery bombardment. The southern troops marched half a mile over an open field to attack the enemy. Mowed down by Federal artillery, the southerners repeatedly closed up ranks and stepped over fallen comrades to continue their charge. As they drew closer to the lines in blue, the Confederates were raked by musket fire at nearly point-blank range. Deadly hand-to-hand combat ensued for those who made it to the Union defenses. After horrible punishment, the remnants of the gray brigades retreated. Both armies then gazed at the heaps of the dead and wounded strewn across the Pennsylvania field and Emmitsburg Road.[26]

The two women who marched across the field in the glorious but doomed Pickett's Charge did not return. One of them was severely wounded, unable to move herself from the pasture. That evening, a Union private from New Jersey who was detailed to guard Emmitsburg Road listened to her screams of agony. He later wrote that it was the most awful sound he had ever heard. The other woman was killed in the charge, her body later found by a Union burial detail.[27]

While the Battle of Gettysburg was raging in the east, the Siege of Vicksburg in the west was rapidly drawing to a close. It began May 18, 1863, when Federal forces under Gen. U.S. Grant moved across the Big Black River, took the heights outside of the Mississippi River city, and laid siege. Confederate forces under Gen. John C. Pemberton refused to evacuate the well-fortified city of Vicksburg. The Union army shelled the city for six weeks and assaulted it twice. Jennie Hodgers, alias Pvt. Albert D. J. Cashier of the 95th Illinois Infantry, was among the Union troops laying siege. She was captured at a Confederate outpost during a reconnaissance around the city but managed to escape by seizing a gun from one of her guards, knocking him down, and outrunning the others. Comrades also

recalled Private Cashier climbing to the top of their fieldworks to taunt the enemy into showing themselves. On July 4, 1863, the Confederates, who were running out of food and had little hope of outside help, surrendered Vicksburg to Grant's army. One of the southern troops who marched out of the city that day was Ellen Levasay, a private in the 3rd Missouri Cavalry.[28]

Two days before the surrender of Vicksburg, Confederate John Hunt Morgan and his cavalry began their famous raid into Kentucky and points north. On July 4, the same day that Pemberton surrendered, Morgan and his force were repulsed at the affair of Green River, Kentucky, also called Tebb's Bend. Lizzie Compton, earlier wounded at Fredericksburg and subsequently mustered out of the United States service, had gone west and rejoined the army. She allied with the 25th Michigan Infantry as a battlefield replacement and was shot in the shoulder at Green River. This engagement did not halt Morgan's Raid, which finally ended on July 26 with the capture of the Confederate cavalry commander.[29]

Women soldiers participated in other campaigns and battles throughout 1863. From September 19 to September 21, the Union Army of the Cumberland fought the Confederate Army of Tennessee along Chickamauga Creek in northwestern Georgia, where casualty rates totaled 28 percent for both sides. An unnamed Ohio woman fought in the battle by the side of her father, and she survived the Union defeat. On the Louisiana Gulf Coast the following month, Union Gen. Nathaniel Banks began the Bayou Teche campaign. His goal was to reach Texas and establish a foothold there, but his maneuvers ended in failure in November 1863 after a month of effort. An anonymous woman soldier in the 14th Maine Infantry served throughout the difficult campaign.[30]

On Tuesday, November 24, the day before Banks's campaign ended, three Union divisions under Gen. Joseph Hooker climbed up Lookout Mountain in hopes of dislodging Confederate defenders from the heights above Chattanooga, Tennessee. The Union assault was successful, driving the Confederates off of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. The Union divisions fielded at least two women. One was Mary Ellen Wise of Indiana. She was shot in the shoulder but lived to tell about it. The second woman soldier was not so lucky. Identified only as Emily, she served with a Michigan regiment. She was shot in the side during the advance up the mountain, and her wound proved fatal.[31]

In Virginia, Union cavalry mounted an expedition to Charles City

Courthouse on December 12, 1863, and successfully raided it the following day. An assistant surgeon in one of the regiments later wrote to his father, "We captured every officer and man. . . . Among the prisoners was a female soldier, a woman of about 20 years. She had male attire, and used her rifle against us, as well as the rest. She has been in several engagements."[32]

Participation of women soldiers on the fields of battle continued unabated in 1864. They served in the Red River, Atlanta, and Nashville campaigns. The fourth year of the conflict also saw distaff soldiers taking part in most of the fighting in Virginia—at Bermuda Hundred, in the Shenandoah Valley, and as members of Lee's and Grant's grand armies, who were engaged almost constantly throughout the year from the Wilderness to the outskirts of Petersburg.

In Louisiana, Pvt. Albert D. J. Cashier fought with her regiment throughout the Red River campaign. In March 1864 Union forces under General Banks marched through the heart of Louisiana and up the Red River in a massive but ill-fated Union effort. Cashier fought in more than a dozen battles and skirmishes during the campaign, and like all the other Union soldiers who survived it, marched for hundreds of miles, often in desperate circumstances, as Union troops retreated back down the Red River to the Mississippi. The disastrous campaign concluded on May 21.[33]

Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, alias Pvt. Lyons Wakeman of the 153rd New York Infantry, was engaged in two Red River battles, Pleasant Hill on April 9, and Monett's Ferry on April 23. More than a year before the campaign, and prior to her first taste of combat, Wakeman wrote to her father, "I don't fear the rebel bullets nor I don't fear the cannon." Once the campaign was underway in earnest, Wakeman did not lose her fearlessness. In a letter home she bragged about her stamina and bravery. Fifteen days into the campaign, she informed her parents, "I have marched two hundred miles. We was ten days on the road amarching." Wakeman emerged unscathed from the engagement at Pleasant Hill, where her regiment was in the front lines. Afterwards, she wrote to her family to let them know she was alive, and she described the battle for them: "The firing took place about eight o'Clock in the morning. There was a heavy Cannonading all day and a Sharp firing of infantry. . . . I had to face the enemy bullets with my regiment. I was under fire about four hours and laid on the field of battle all night."[34]

Wakeman wrote this letter while her army was entrenched and her gen-

erals were deciding the fate of the campaign. The decision was made to flee the Louisiana high country. On the evening of April 21, the army began a seventy-mile forced retreat. By midnight of April 22, they had covered thirty-five miles in fourteen hours. At sunrise on the twenty-third, the army reached Monett's Bluff, where they found the Confederates holding the opposite high bank and blocking the Federal's advance. The Union army forced a crossing and the battle began. That afternoon, Wakeman and the 1st Brigade charged the Confederate force in a frontal attack, and their army finally defeated the Confederates and resumed the retreat. Wakeman survived the bold charge at Monett's Ferry, but she did not survive the war.[35]

As the Red River campaign drew to a close, the Union advance on Atlanta began in northern Georgia. On Saturday, May 7, three armies under the command of Gen. William T. Sherman started their moves against a smaller Confederate force led by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. The bluecoats' goal was the capture of the city of Atlanta, the attainment of which consumed the next four months. Sherman's forces finally took the city on September 2. The four-month campaign saw more than a dozen battles, skirmishes, and raids. Women soldiers fought in at least four of the engagements.[36]

The first major battle took place May 13 to 15 at Resaca, Georgia. An unidentified Union woman soldier was killed in action there, shot in the head. Later that month, in a fight near Dallas, Georgia, several Confederate women, one of whom was a flag bearer, fell in a fierce final assault on Union lines. Sgt. Robert Ardry of the 111th Illinois Infantry wrote to his father, "They fought like demons, and we cut them down like dogs. . . . I saw 3 or 4 rebel women soldiers in the heap of bodies."[37]

July 20, 1864, witnessed the Battle of Peachtree Creek, wherein Confederate soldiers under command of Gen. John B. Hood bravely but fruitlessly attacked a steadfast Union force for two hours. Of the 4,796 casualties inflicted on the Confederates that afternoon, at least four were women. Union soldier James L. Dunn later reported that "among the reble wounded we found several women in mens clothes also among the killed." Another Union soldier was more specific: "I've picked up a great many wounded rebs & took them to our hospital among these were found a female dressed in mens clothes & a cartridge box on her side when we picked her up. She was shot in the breast & through the thy & was still

alive & as gritty as any reb I ever saw. I hope our women will never be so foolish as to go to war or get to fighting."[38]

The engagement at Allatoona on October 5 was the last of the battles near Atlanta known to involve women combatants. Three of the 443 Confederates wounded there were women, but their identities are a mystery. One of them served in the Missouri Brigade, and a Union soldier who helped tend the wounded of Allatoona told her story after the battle: "A tanned and freckled young rebel, hands and face grimy with dirt and powder, lay resting on an elbow, smoking a corn-cob pipe. The doctor inquired, 'How do you feel?' and the answer was 'Pretty well, but my leg hurts like the devil.'"[39]

Women soldiers were engaged in one more battle in the west before the close of 1864. After losing Atlanta, Confederate forces under Hood moved into Tennessee in an attempt to draw Sherman out of Georgia. After fighting and losing at Franklin, Hood brought his army to Nashville. Pvt. Albert Cashier was with the Army of the Cumberland on December 15 when it emerged from its works at Nashville and attacked the Confederates. Throughout the day's fighting, the northerners beat the southerners back a full mile. Realignments were made in the lines during the night, and the next day, after a morning of artillery bombardment and despite rain and snow, Union soldiers assaulted the Confederates again. The lines of the Army of Tennessee finally broke, and the Confederates fled. For eight more days, Union soldiers pursued retreating Confederates.[40]

Cashier emerged from it all uninjured. Indeed, Cashier emerged from the entire war without ever becoming a casualty. She served a full enlistment, and long after the war, her fellow veterans remembered the diminutive private with the Irish brogue as a good and brave soldier, and expressed a great deal of admiration for her heroic fighting. Her compatriots marveled that despite her willingness to take on dangerous assignments, she was never injured or wounded. One of her fellow soldiers affirmed that Cashier was known throughout the regiment for bravery in combat. Another veteran remembered Cashier's exposing herself to sniper fire by climbing a tall tree to attach the Union flag after it was shot down by the enemy.[41]

After Nashville, Private Cashier served through one final campaign, a move to capture Mobile, Alabama. Union forces surrounded the city on March 17, 1865. They laid siege on the twenty-sixth, and the city surrendered April 12, 1865. Cashier's regiment occupied Mobile thereafter, hav-

ing been among the first troops to enter the defeated city. The occupation of Mobile was the last military assignment in this brave soldier's army career.[42]

In the eastern theater, the war raged in Virginia throughout 1864, and women were there. Hardly a day of the fourth year of the war passed without some form of military maneuver in the state, the scene of virtually nonstop campaigning between forces arrayed from the Shenandoah Valley to the Atlantic Coast. On May 5, 1864, Union Gen. Ben Butler landed at City Point and Bermuda Hundred with the intention of marching up the peninsula and taking Richmond. Among his troops was the anonymous woman soldier of the 14th Maine Infantry, whose regiment had been transferred from the Deep South. Butler's command made it as far as Drewry's Bluff, where they were driven back. They retreated to Bermuda Hundred and remained bottled up on the peninsula by Confederate forces under Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard. Part of Butler's command was then deployed to the Shenandoah Valley, leaving via the James River.[43]

The 14th Maine Infantry was among the regiments sent, and the anonymous woman soldier of that regiment served in the 1864 Shenandoah Valley campaign until it ended on December 19. She was mustered out of the Federal service with the rest of her regiment on January 13, 1865. The 1864 Valley campaign was long, fierce, and bloody for soldiers of both sides. Union troops under Gen. David Hunter, who was succeeded by Gen. Philip Sheridan, faced Confederate troops under Gen. Jubal Early. The two forces fought up and down the Valley for more than six months, clashing more than fifteen times in raids, skirmishes, and full-fledged battles. On the Confederate side of the Valley campaign, Mary and Mollie Bell, alias Bob Martin and Tom Parker, fought until October, when they were sent to Richmond. The Bells were veteran soldiers, having served for about two years prior to the campaign.[44]

Elsewhere in Virginia in 1864, the great contest between Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee raged from near Fredericksburg to Petersburg. It began May 4, when Union soldiers marched southward from their positions on the north banks of the Rapidan River. From that point forward the Army of the Potomac steadily and relentlessly pushed forward, never retreating as in the past. Grant's aim was to capture Richmond, destroy Lee's army, and end the war. Achieving these goals took nearly a year.[45]

During the overland campaign, from May to June 1864, Grant's Army of the Potomac and Lee's Army of Northern Virginia fought nine major

asked, "Well, what sort of a living has this hand earned?" to which Thompson replied that it had been primarily engaged in getting an education. The examiner passed the small private into the army on May 25, 1861, not knowing that the recruit's true identity was Sarah Emma Edmonds, aged nineteen. Pvt. Albert D. J. Cashier and "his" comrades were all examined on the same day, were not stripped, and, testified one, "All that we showed was our hands and feet." Another claimed that "a woman would not have had any trouble in passing the examination." Thus, nineteen-year-old Jennie Hodgers slipped into the ranks of the 95th Illinois Infantry on August 3, 1862, serving an entire three-year enlistment as Private Cashier and mustering out with her regiment on August 17, 1865. Another Union soldier recalled his entrance examination, saying that "the muster-in . . . was . . . a farce; no medical or physical examination; the mustering officer hastily passed along the line, taking a look at each individual as he passed, and without other ceremony, mustered the regiment into the . . . service." It is no wonder, then, that hundreds of women found the army physical exam no barrier to joining the cavalry, artillery, or infantry.[6]

Women also found ways to avoid the medical examination requirement altogether. Sometimes, a surgeon or an officer helped them. Hattie Martin, a young Pennsylvania newlywed who wanted to join her husband in the ranks, "made known her sex to the examining surgeon, and at her earnest solicitation he accepted her as a recruit" despite the fact that this was a fraudulent enlistment according to army regulations. In the summer of 1862, Marian Green decided to follow her fiancé to war and, in collusion with the surgeon, joined a detachment of soldiers headed for the front to serve in the 1st Michigan Engineers and Mechanics. When Harriet Merrill arrived at the camp of the 59th New York Infantry in November 1861 in the company of three other recruits, she was given the standard quartermaster issue of clothing, enlisted in Company G, and was not required to submit to a physical exam. In Merrill's case, the captain of the regiment knew her true identity and assisted her in joining the regiment. Likewise, the surgeon of the 12th Indiana Cavalry arranged for his own wife to serve as his assistant.[7]

Not all surgeons or other officers ignored examination standards. Nevertheless, a resourceful woman could find her way into a regiment despite the most conscientious efforts of military surgeons and recruitment officers. A "bright, black-eyed boy" showed up at Camp Curtin and offered

seven-year-old Miss Martin of Cincinnati was said to possess "a fair education" though she had worked as a cook and a domestic prior to the war. Jane Perkins was obviously an educated woman, because prior to the war she was a teacher in Virginia.[38]

Lizzie Compton, on the other hand, was unschooled and also lacking in any religious instruction, which was unusual in the mid-nineteenth century. Melverina Peppercorn hailed from the Tennessee mountains. Hers was a poor family of subsistence farmers, and she was probably illiterate. Lucy Gauss was definitely illiterate, as was Elizabeth Finnern. Like many Civil War soldiers, Finnern and her husband were immigrants, having come to the United States from Germany. Martha Lindley and Albert Cashier were both Irish immigrants.[39]

Regardless of their backgrounds, many women enjoyed the adventure and the freedom that being away from home and being in the army afforded them. This spirit of adventure was yet another common motivation for Civil War soldiers, both male and female. "I am as independent as a hog on the ice," Rosetta Wakeman wrote. The young Sophia Cryder was said to be "a girl of unblemished reputation"; however, she "did not, as generally happens in such cases, enlist to be near the object of her affections, but merely in a wild spirit of adventure," reported the Harrisburg *Patriot and Union*. Jane Short, alias Charley Davis, enlisted in a Missouri Union infantry regiment because she was "pining for the excitement of glorious war." Rebecca "Georgianna" Peterman went to war with her relatives, but being with them was not her only motive. A country girl from Ellenboro, Wisconsin, she was always known as an adventurous soul. Indeed, Peterman's former schoolteacher said that "plain country life was not enough for her ambition."[40]

The passions and whims that propelled so many adventurous young men into Civil War armies likewise motivated many women to seek the excitement promised by the wartime military. Loreta Velazquez cited multiple reasons for joining the Confederate army, chief among them the passion to do something exciting. "I plunged into adventure for the love of the thing," she recalled after the war. When questioned about her reasons for enlisting in the 2nd Iowa Infantry, Nellie Williams replied that she volunteered merely to be a soldier, adding that she liked the life. Sarah Edmonds confessed that she was naturally adventurous, ambitious, and romantic. She said that the privations and danger of life in the army were thrilling and stoked her spirit of adventure. Albert Cashier explained after

the war that the country needed men and she wanted excitement. As she was already living as a man, she thought she would try her luck in the army.[41]

Like Albert Cashier, a small number of women were living as men prior to the war and thus were subject to the same peer pressure felt by their male counterparts to sign up for "three years or the duration." Their motivations for enlisting might well have approximated the common concern among male inductees to prove or reaffirm their manhood by performing their masculine duty to defend and protect their country—only in the case of women passing as men, their fear of being revealed as something other than men if they did not "ante up and pitch in" was quite real. For example, Rosetta Wakeman left her job as a domestic, dressed as a man, and obtained work as a coal handler on a Chenango Canal boat. At the end of the first trip, she and her coworkers encountered Union army recruiters. Encouragement from those colleagues may have been an added incentive when Wakeman enlisted and received her handsome local and state bounties. In any event, when Wakeman told the recruiters that her peacetime occupation was boatman, she was telling the truth. Katie Hanson was another woman living as a man prior to the war. Always noted for her "predilection for masculine ways"—probably a tomboy or independent thinker in modern parlance—she left home and, disguising herself as a man, found work on a Great Lakes steamboat. Because she was "an expert rifle woman," she joined an Ohio regiment in 1861.[42]

The women who passed as men prior to the war were largely motivated to adopt male identities because of their legal, social, and economic status. Society placed so many restrictions on women that for those who found themselves to be "redundant," that is, unmarried and childless, life tended to be quite difficult. Because working- and lower-class women had few appealing options outside of marriage, these were the women who were most likely to pass as men in the antebellum period. By simply changing a set of clothes, changing a name, changing a hairstyle, and adopting a male alias, many women found that they could easily bypass all of society's barriers to creating a decent, comfortable, and independent lifestyle for themselves. Albert Cashier worked as a laborer, farmhand, and shepherd prior to enlisting in the Union army. She found that "in herding sheep it was better to have the male attire and as she was following that occupation . . . she kept that attire." Rosetta Wakeman earned more money with which to support herself and to help her indebted family while working as a boat-

soldiers on both sides of the conflict is well known. In addition to the hardships of campaigning, the debilitating diet, and the general psychological stress of maintaining a male disguise, the horrors of battle surely produced tremendous anxiety and strain. Twice as many Civil War soldiers died from disease as from wounds received in battle. Soldiers lived under the constant threat of death or disfigurement whether or not their regiment saw combat, and chronic stress was a fact of life for the average soldier.[2]

A woman soldier who became amenorrheic simply faced one less worry in maintaining her male disguise. That left the twin problems of bathing and changing clothes. These were not daily concerns, however. Soldiers, especially those on the march, often went for months at a time without a change of clothes. They bathed just as infrequently. When three women combatants arrived in Cairo, Illinois, in January 1863, among thirty or forty other Confederate prisoners, it was noted that they were "unwashed like the others."[3]

Women soldiers who sought privacy to change clothes or bathe would not have aroused a great deal of suspicion, especially since they had already established reputations as modest men when they daily found private toilet areas. Sgt. Herman Weiss, 6th New York Heavy Artillery, explained to his wife how a woman in his regiment had maintained her male persona for close to three years: "It is no wonder at all that her tent mates did not know that she was a woman for you must know that we never undress to go to bed. [O]n the contrary we dress up, we go to bed with boots, overcoat and all on and she could find chances enough when she would be in the tent alone to change her clothes."[4]

After the war, comrades of Jennie Hodgers, alias Pvt. Albert D. J. Cashier of the 95th Illinois Infantry, stated that no one ever saw her naked. They remembered that she had a bunk mate, even though she did not particularly want one. Cashier was never discovered to be a woman while in the army, presumably in large part because soldiers spent the majority of their time outdoors with a wide latitude to seek out privacy. If Cashier's case was typical, the inherent challenges of personal hygiene would seem to have been easily met by most of the women in the ranks.[5]

A tougher challenge for women soldiers was looking like men. Cutting their hair and putting on male clothing may have ensured success at enlistment, but women came under closer scrutiny, particularly by their comrades, after they joined their regiments. Strict Victorian adherence to differences in male and female attire assisted women in their disguise,

however, because so few people knew what women might look like in pants. Indeed, in the 1860s, clothing was the most potent public indication of gender. Even so, women still had to hide their feminine figures, and in this they were unintentionally aided by their armies. The uniforms issued to enlisted men, both Union and Confederate, were cut quite loose and did not fit well. As Sergeant Weiss explained to his wife, "Soldier clothes dont fit very snug to the body."[6]

Loreta Velazquez, alias Lt. Harry T. Buford, CSA, possessed the wealth and resources to have uniforms tailored just for her. She wore six wire net shields under her uniform to make her form bulkier and wider in the shoulders. Chest and shoulder straps held the shields in place under a silk undershirt. For added effect she sometimes wore a false moustache.[7] Since most of the women soldiers did not come from a monied background, they lacked the resources to go to such lengths. Some waist padding and breast binding coupled with ill-fitting army clothes was usually enough to conceal even the shapeliest of women.

Some women seemed to have an easier time passing for men than others. A woman known only as Kate, the girlfriend of one of the lieutenants in the 116th Illinois Infantry, was adept at her disguise. As a fellow private noted in a letter home, "You could hardly tell her from a man. I did not notice her till in camp . . . and then I would not [have] if some one had not showed her to me." Private Cashier was badly pock marked on her face, which rendered her appearance less soft and feminine. A woman who served in the 1st Kansas Infantry under the alias Alfred J. Luther was described posthumously as a large individual with masculine features. Confederate soldier Melverina Elverina Peppercorn was a tall, big-boned girl of sixteen. Mary W. Dennis of Minnesota was over six feet tall. Frances Louisa Clayton, who served with a Union regiment from Missouri, was described as a "very tall, masculine looking woman bronzed by exposure."[8]

Ella Reno, a niece of Brig. Gen. Jesse Reno, served in both the 5th Kentucky Cavalry (U.S.) and the 8th Michigan Infantry. Gen. Philip Sheridan described her as coarse and masculine, with large features. "She would readily have passed as a man," he recalled after the war. Capt. Daniel Reed Larned, secretary to Gen. Ambrose Burnside, said Reno was of average size, with a brown face and short, "army fashion" hair. His opinion of Reno's looks, however, was different from Sheridan's. After meeting her in May 1863, he wrote that Reno was "not a bad looking woman; how she ever passed for a man I can't see."[9]

years old. He was correct. Compton first enlisted in the Union army at the age of fourteen and was still a minor when the war ended. Charlotte Hope, who passed as Charlie Hopper in the 1st Virginia Cavalry (CSA), appeared to her comrades to be a boy about sixteen years of age.[16]

One newspaper article related that Rebecca "Georgianna" Peterman was "rather slenderly formed, but with somewhat masculine features, though with a very small and delicate hand. In walk and carriage she has every appearance of a boy." Another reported that "in her soldier's clothes [she] has the appearance of a rather good looking boy of sixteen. She is of medium height, with dark eyes and hair. . . . She is very quiet." Yet another article about Peterman declared that "all who have seen this military specimen . . . agree that she is unusually good looking." Peterman's former schoolteacher even chimed in with his opinion of her masquerade, noting, "I remember seeing her in her uniform—she was a fine looking soldier in fact looked better as a soldier than as a girl." Indeed, Peterman so looked like a soldier that no one in her regiment, other than her cousin and stepbrother, ever suspected her sex over the course of several years.[17]

Fannie Wilson served in the 3rd Illinois Cavalry, was nineteen years old, "of a masculine voice," and described as tanned and smart and "somewhat educated." She was "easily able to pass herself off for a boy of about seventeen or eighteen." Similarly, Pvt. John Thompson of the 1st Kentucky Infantry (U.S.), whose real name is unknown, "looked as manly as most boys at eighteen." Thompson feared that her lack of an Adams apple might give her away, so she always kept her coat buttoned to the chin.[18]

Pvt. Albert Cashier had a similar worry, because she, too, always kept her shirt buttoned to the collar regardless of the weather. She hid the fact that she had no Adam's apple, but she could not hide the fact that she had no beard or other facial hair. Her fellow soldiers often remarked upon it. Additionally, Cashier carried the distinction of being the smallest soldier in her company. Nevertheless, Cashier was viewed by her fellow soldiers and commanding officers as "a short well built man." With her light complexion, blue eyes, and auburn hair, she resembled the many other Irish-Americans who served in the Union army.[19]

After the war, comrades of Sarah Edmonds, alias Pvt. Franklin Thompson of the 2nd Michigan Infantry, testified that although she was an effeminate-looking soldier, she had concealed her sex admirably. Twenty years after Edmonds left the Union army, Gen. Orlando M. Poe, for whom Franklin Thompson acted as orderly during the Battle of Fredericksburg,

Buford as a dashing young Confederate officer, she should flirt with women. She even took a few out on dates, and reported that she was "tolerably successful" with the "opposite" sex. Albert Cashier apparently reported having a girlfriend for about two years. Throughout the war Cashier corresponded with the Morey family of Babcock's Grove, Illinois. Three of the Morey's letters to her inquire about a "sweetheart," wondering if Albert would bring her home at the end of the war, and asking if Albert had bought her a new dress. The Morey family, like the soldiers with whom Cashier served, did not know that Cashier was a woman. Since Cashier's letters to the Morey family have not been found, further information about the relationship between Cashier and the "sweetheart" is unavailable. Whether this was a lesbian relationship, a platonic courtship designed to bolster Cashier's male persona, or a complete fabrication is not known. Prior to the war, Sarah Edmonds, who enjoyed a successful career as a door-to-door Bible salesman using her persona of Franklin Thompson, owned a horse and buggy and took women out on dates. As with Cashier, the nature of these relationships is unclear. Although Edmonds admitted to them, she never explained them. From all accounts her postwar marriage was a happy one, so it seems likely her prewar courtships were merely designed to enhance her male masquerade.[26]

Other women soldiers relied on the assistance of the loved ones with whom they enlisted to help maintain the fiction that they were men. The presence of a companion who knew her secret sometimes proved critical to a woman soldier's ability to preserve her masquerade. A case in point was the woman discovered in the ranks of a New Jersey regiment because she gave birth to a baby boy. "It was as much surprising to the Company that she belonged to as it is to me or you," wrote a soldier. "The Company had noticed that she always tented with one person, and many times when it was her turn to come on duty that her tent mate would take her place." The assistance of this loved one obviously helped the woman soldier conceal her pregnancy and thus her sex.[27]

Another example is Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Epping, who served with their husbands in the 2nd Maryland Infantry (U.S.). Their captain remembered them: "It was while the regiment was being formed on the beach at Roanoke Island . . . that the officer of the guard detected two women in the ranks of Company G. . . . [T]hey were pointed out to me, the most pitiful objects that one could imagine. They were in new full uniforms of the United States soldier, with hair knotted under their caps, fully armed

and equipped, with muskets in hand. These poor trembling weak creatures held their places in line however, being held up by the soldiers in the secret, who stood by them." Mrs. Watkins and Mrs. Epping, with the help of their husbands, lasted six months in their regiment before the captain noticed they were women.[28]

The main reason that other women soldiers were successful in maintaining male disguises for long periods of time, however, is that the majority of the Civil War distaff soldiers were working-class and farm women. This background enabled them to make the transition from civilian to soldier more easily. Adapting to the hard life of a soldier was not so difficult for them because notions of idealized womanhood were hardly applicable to their lives. These women were accustomed to hard work and well acquainted with manual labor and drudgery before their army careers began. Farming and frontier women were generally adept at using firearms and working with horses. The working-class women, especially those from urban areas, were also quite used to poor living conditions.

When Melverina Peppercorn enlisted in the Confederate army, she could shoot as well as the twin brother she joined with and was "strong as a man," and no one in her family doubted that she could do the job. The woman who enlisted as John Thompson in the 1st Kentucky Infantry (U.S.) was equally hardy. One reporter noted that "She performed camp duties with great fortitude, and never fell out of the ranks during the severest marches." She was never heard to complain, either. Lucy Gauss of the 18th North Carolina Infantry was a tall and masculine-looking woman who could hunt, ride, and shoot long before she enlisted. A fellow soldier in the 95th Illinois Infantry remarked that Albert Cashier could "do as much work as anyone in the Company."[29]

In addition to strength and endurance, some women possessed useful talents. Frances Clayton was an "accomplished horse-man." Frank Martin was another "first-rate horsewoman," so she often worked as a scout. Frank Martin may also have had some musical training, for she initially enlisted as a bugler. Martha Lindley was good with horses and rather fond of the animals before her enlistment. Life in the cavalry came naturally to her. Sarah Edmonds learned horseback riding as a child, but perhaps equally important in her life as a soldier, she wore trousers and learned to use firearms while she worked on the family farm.[30]

Loreta Velazquez prepared for her army service by drawing on her experiences as an army wife before the war. Her first husband was an officer

in the United States army, and they lived at a variety of forts. She easily adapted to life in the Confederate army because she knew the military argot and was familiar with army organization and drills. Just as importantly, she knew how to procure a tactics manual and use the forms needed by an officer to raise and maintain a regiment, such as recruiting papers and muster rolls.[31]

For those who passed as men and held masculine jobs prior to enlisting in the army, their experiences held them in good stead. Sophia Cryder had worked as a teamster, so she had some notion of what she might encounter in the service. Lizzie Compton worked on a steamboat. Albert Cashier was a farmer, a shepherd, and a laborer before joining the army, having passed as a man for several years prior to the war. Even though Rosetta Wakeman only passed as a man for a few weeks before enlistment, her job as a coal handler on a Chenango Canal boat proved a valuable introduction to the world of men. She had also worked as a domestic, and she grew up on a farm in Afton, New York. Being the eldest child, she probably assisted her father as a farmhand. Indeed, having labored all her life, Wakeman was clearly prepared to take on the life of a soldier.[32]

When telling his wife about a woman in his regiment in March 1865, Sergeant Weiss wrote, "I suppose she was tough." Such sentiments were expressed about a number of women soldiers. Sarah Collins of Wisconsin was in good physical health and "could easily have borne the hardships incident to a soldier's life." Albert Cashier was rigorously healthy during her three years in the Union army. Sarah Edmonds was so hardy that while at training camp in Fort Wayne, Michigan, she not only performed all the regular tasks of a soldier, such as drilling and fatigue duty, but in her off-duty hours she also volunteered as a nurse for her sick comrades. It was the tough women, the strong women, and the hardworking women who boasted the most successful military careers, especially once they grew accustomed to portraying men. Loreta Velazquez wrote that after she learned to act and talk like a man, and after she grew comfortable with her new wardrobe, she no longer feared detection and she no longer needed to work so hard at her persona.[33]

The women soldiers of the Union and Confederate armies underwent a rapid and necessary transition from a female to a male identity. While their sex remained female, their gender identity increasingly became male oriented as they adopted male behaviors and attitudes. They enjoyed the freedom that living as men gave them, and they especially enjoyed wearing

veloped deep and lasting friendships with men, too. Jerome Robbins of the 2nd Michigan Infantry highly prized the friendship of Franklin Thompson but was shocked and felt betrayed when he finally learned that Thompson was really Sarah Edmonds. Despite these feelings, he kept her secret. Robbins did note prior to the discovery that Thompson acted "strangely," and he confided in his diary, "Foolish as it may seem a mystery appearts to me connected with him which is impossible for me to fatham." He described Thompson as possessing "a nature to willful to be pleasant—to jealous to be happy or lend happiness to those whom he has a warm friendship for." Their friendship flourished nevertheless, with Robbins mentioning it seven times in his diary. He referred to their relationship as a "consolation" and "a blessing," and even declared, "This friendship [is] one of the greatest events of my life." The two soldiers spent much of their free time in conversation, especially in their first year of service together, and Robbins felt quite lonely when Thompson ultimately made friends with her other tent mates and began spending less time with him. Their friendship never completely waned, though. Robbins nursed Edmonds through one of her bouts of malaria.[41]

Albert Cashier also formed friendships with her compatriots. When comrade Amos Morton was injured and sent to Gayoso Hospital, he wrote to his "Dear friend Albert" to report on his health, to request that Cashier "take care of [his] clothes" and to let Cashier know that he "had not forgoten [Cashier] intierly." Morton was so fond of Cashier that he wanted Albert to join him and his wife when they moved to Iowa after the war. Another comrade, John D. Caswell, corresponded with Cashier after he left the infantry. Caswell wanted news of the regiment, requested that Cashier collect on debts owed to him, and most importantly, wanted Cashier to visit him on furlough. Cashier and Samuel Pepper, also of the 95th Illinois Infantry, got along so well that they established a business after the war, briefly operating a plant nursery in Belvedere, Illinois. The closeness of their relationship is indicated by the fact that, on an 1866 trip to Chicago, Cashier bought a ham and carpeting to send to Pepper and Pepper lent Cashier money. Cashier was illiterate; therefore one or more of the men in her regiment read to her the letters she received and wrote down her dictated replies. But the most telling testimonial to the bonds Cashier forged with her comrades is how, more than forty years later, they rallied to her defense when her sex became publicly known, when the Pen-

sion Bureau investigated her, and when the State of Illinois committed her to an insane asylum.[42]

Cashier was esteemed by more than just the men with whom she served. She enjoyed a wide circle of acquaintances, friends, and loved ones, both in and out of the army. Cashier's relationship with the Morey family on the home front extended beyond correspondence. Cashier sent them money, blankets, and other gifts, and in turn, they wrote to her with news of mutual friends and reports on crops and sent her care packages and postage stamps. The Moreys worried about Cashier's health and diet, continually encouraged Albert to come to them after the war and attend school, and exclaimed over the photographs she periodically sent them. The family scanned published casualty lists, anxiously looking for Cashier's name. The Morey children often added postscripts to their mother's letters, and they were always excited to hear news about Albert. Cashier also corresponded with two other friends in Belvedere, Michael Murphy and Lauren Hamlin. Cashier sent Murphy Confederate postage stamps as souvenirs, as well as a photograph. Hamlin was the sister of another soldier in the 95th Illinois Infantry, and when he died, Cashier wrote a condolence letter to the family. Hamlin responded to this kindness by requesting that Albert come to them "as if you were coming home for we shall always be glad to see you."[43]

Both during and after the war Cashier's circle of friends did not know that Albert was a woman. Similarly, there is no evidence that the soldiers of the 153rd New York Infantry had any inkling that Lyons Wakeman was actually Rosetta Wakeman. But others in the army did know Wakeman's secret. While stationed in Washington, D.C., she found out that two childhood friends were serving in a regiment not far from her. On October 13, 1863, Wakeman wrote home: "I went to my lieutenant and got a pass for today and this morning I Started for Georgetown, and when I got there . . . I got a man to row me across the River to the island and then I found Henry Austin and Perry Wilder. They knew me just as Soon as they see me. You better believe I had a good visit with them. I stayed about two Hours and Started back for Camp again." It seems unlikely that Wakeman had the time or opportunity to purchase and put on a dress before visiting her friends, meaning that she called on Austin and Wilder in her uniform. Like her family in New York, they knew her secret, and they kept it.[44]

Some male soldiers eventually realized that they had female soldiers in their midst. Some of the men reported their discovery to commanding of-

during the final month of Private Wakeman's life. What is known is that she occupied one of the 5,808 Union army hospital beds in New Orleans. Perhaps the medical staff was so overwhelmed with sick and wounded soldiers that Wakeman received little individual attention. With a soaring death rate in New Orleans that summer from an outbreak of yellow fever as well as casualties from the Red River campaign, the dead were probably hurriedly put in coffins and buried as quickly as possible. The case of Private Wakeman raises the question of how many other women soldiers died of disease, their sex not discovered by nurses or surgeons.[32]

Other women soldiers survived their illnesses. Charles Martin, the runaway child turned regimental clerk, was taken ill with typhoid fever and sent to a Philadelphia hospital. When she recovered, she was sent home to her parents, who thought she was dead. Yet another Charlie, a veteran of both Battles of Bull Run, was stricken with typhoid when her regiment transferred to Tennessee. Sent to a Memphis hospital, she was happy to go home when she recovered. She had enlisted with her betrothed, but he had died previously.[33]

In some cases, the exact cause of a woman soldier's illness was not known, or at least not recorded. Fannie Wilson and Nellie Graves, who had followed their sweethearts into the 24th New Jersey Infantry, caught the same unspecified illness and were sent to Cairo along with other sick and wounded from their brigade. Discovered in the hospital, they were discharged from the service and sent home when they recovered. On November 7, 1862, Pvt. Charles Freeman, listed as serving with the 52nd Ohio Infantry, was admitted to a hospital in Lebanon, Kentucky, suffering from a fever. She was transferred to General Hospital No. 11 in Louisville, where a flustered hospital clerk recorded that Freeman was suffering not only from a fever but also from "sextual incompatibility," giving the term a whole new meaning. Private Freeman was in reality Mary G. Scaberry of Columbus, Ohio, who had been in military service for four months before falling ill. She was discharged from the service on December 13, 1862, for being "a woman in disguise as a soldier."[34]

Not every sick woman soldier was detected as a result of her illness, however. The stalwart Albert Cashier of the 95th Illinois Infantry was admitted to her regimental hospital on April 28, 1864, complaining of diarrhea. She was released the next day. While this was her only visit to a hospital for the condition, it plagued her for much of the war and she occasionally sought help from the regimental surgeon. Indeed, chronic diar-

rhea was Cashier's unwelcome companion for much of the rest of her life. In 1899, when Cashier sought an increased pension payment, Dr. Charles F. Ross deposed that he had treated the veteran for that illness for ten years. Also in 1899, Cashier submitted to an examination by surgeons of the Medical Division of the Bureau of Pensions. Those doctors concurred that Cashier suffered from chronic diarrhea and inquired about "his" eating habits. Cashier swore that the condition was the result of the war. Astonishingly, neither Dr. Ross nor the Pension Bureau doctors realized that Albert Cashier was a woman.[35] The state of medical care in the late nineteenth century was clearly different than it is today.

Wounds and illness were two physical risks that all soldiers faced, regardless of their sex. Women soldiers faced the additional physical risks inherent in pregnancy and childbirth. Six soldiers are known to have performed their military duties while pregnant. Incredibly, none of their comrades noticed their condition until the women went into labor and delivered their babies. Two Confederate prisoners of war gave birth while incarcerated, and babies were born to Union women as well.

The most sensational case was the unidentified corporal from New Jersey who gave birth to a baby boy while on duty in winter camp on the Rappahannock River in Virginia. Col. Adrian Root of the 94th New York Infantry recorded the event in a letter to his mother, writing, "When I was last on duty as General Officer of the Day I came across a very singular case of illness out on the picket line. . . . A corporal of a New Jersey regiment who was on duty with the pickets complained of being unwell, but little notice was given his complaints at first. His pain and other symptoms of severe indisposition increased, becoming so evident that his officers had him carried to a nearby farmhouse. There the worthy corporal was safely delivered of a fine, fat little recruit for the . . . regiment!" The farmhouse where she delivered her child was in use as an army hospital. Another soldier reported that when she was taken to the hospital and looked at by the surgeon the "examination caus[ed] a great commotion among the doctors and hospital attendants."[36]

There is little wonder that the event created a sensation. The New Jersey woman had served nearly a year in her regiment, and "no one had suspected anything wrong up to the very hour of the picket line denouement." The birth became the primary gossip of the Army of the Potomac that winter and spring, with many soldiers writing home with the story, expressing surprise, wonderment, and often humor. One soldier even sent

the *mothers* of those girls could be thinking of?" she asked in her diary, observing, "Their conduct seemed to us very improper."[59]

As more and more women were found serving in the Union and Confederate armies, the knowledge of their existence rose from the ranks to army headquarters. Not only did the enlisted men and their commanding officers find out about women soldiers, but luminaries like Sherman, Sheridan, Burnside, D. H. Hill, Wheeler, Forrest, and Lee also became aware of women in their armies. When surprised or admiring male comrades wrote to their friends and relatives about the women in their midst, knowledge of women soldiers spread to the home front. And when news of women soldiers reached the press, it was disseminated to the rest of the reading public. When discovered, some women soldiers were treated fairly, and others were dealt with unjustly. Just as the treatment of women found in the army varied widely, so too did public opinion. Some women soldiers were lauded, and others were condemned.

er's capture by Confederates and medical treatment in Union hospitals was located among the war records.[16]

Former women soldiers who acquired or continued acceptable roles as wives and mothers after the war consistently received favorable press and favorable treatment if and when their stories of military service became public. But not all of the former women soldiers wanted a traditional and acceptable lifestyle, and not all of the former women soldiers wanted public scrutiny, positive or otherwise. Jennie Hodgers, alias Albert D. J. Cashier, was a case in point. She mustered out with the rest of the 95th Illinois Infantry on August 27, 1865, having served a full three-year enlistment. Hodgers then decided to live the rest of her life under her male identity, but her reasons for choosing this route were never clearly delineated. By 1865, her male persona was so definitely established with all her friends and associates that she may have felt she had no choice but to continue the masquerade. Hodgers was also an illiterate Irish immigrant with no apparent family ties in the United States, and she needed to make a living for herself once the war was over. She undoubtedly recognized that she would find many more employment opportunities if the world continued to perceive her as a man.

Albert Cashier lived in four Illinois towns, working as a laborer and briefly owning a plant nursery with a comrade from the war, before she settled permanently in Saunemin, Illinois, in 1869. She then held a variety of jobs as a farmhand, handyman, day laborer, child sitter, janitor, and property caretaker for more than forty years. She even served for a time as the town lamplighter. One of her steady employers, the Chesbro family, became so fond of their handyman that they bought Cashier a house to live in, always set a place for Cashier at their dinner table, and reserved a space in their family cemetery plot as Cashier's final resting place.

In 1890, with the help of a local attorney, Cashier applied for and received a veteran's pension. In 1899, the fifty-five-year-old former soldier requested an increased allotment, as she was becoming disabled and found earning a living more difficult. On July 17, 1899, fifteen acquaintances and former employers signed a statement for the Pension Bureau declaring that Albert Cashier was enfeebled, destitute, and dependent on charity for "aid and support." Such was not exactly the case, but the statement showed that Cashier was highly regarded in her community and that people who knew the old soldier were more than willing to help when needed. The next year, Cashier's doctor informed the Pension Bureau that his patient

was completely disabled and could perform only the lightest of manual labor.

No one, not even the physician, discovered that Albert Cashier was a woman until 1911. Even then, Cashier's sex did not become public knowledge for two more years. While doing odd jobs for Illinois state senator Ira Lish, Cashier's leg was fractured when the senator accidentally backed over her with his automobile. The town doctor was summoned, and in the course of setting the broken thigh discovered that Albert Cashier was a woman. The senator and the surgeon agreed to keep Cashier's secret, only telling the Chesbro sisters, who were summoned to help care for Cashier while her leg healed. The sisters also agreed to stay silent on the matter.

Cashier's health and physical capacities had been slowly declining as she aged, but the broken leg permanently and negatively affected her ability to further support herself. It never properly healed, and Cashier found herself an invalid at the age of sixty-six. Senator Lish, with the assistance of the Saunemin physician, arranged for Cashier's entrance into the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Home in Quincy. As a disabled veteran of the Union army, Cashier qualified to live at the home, but it was certainly due to the influence of Senator Lish that the superintendent of the home agreed to take a woman soldier and keep her secret. The only other individuals at the home who were informed of Cashier's sex were the doctors and the nurses, for obvious reasons. They, too, were sworn to secrecy regarding the matter. Cashier's application for admission to the home showed no indication that she was any different from the other residents. Dated April 11, 1911, the document described Cashier as five feet two inches tall with blue eyes and light brown hair.

Cashier lived at the home for nearly three years, bedridden some of the time. As her physical health continually declined, so too did her mental health diminish. The superintendent placed Cashier under the care of a psychiatrist, Dr. Leroy Scott, who immediately took a keen interest in the female veteran. He talked with Cashier frequently, wanting to know all about her past and her reasons for living as she did. Even after Cashier left the home, Scott continued to piece together her life, interviewing all her old friends and employers and making written inquiries to various places in Ireland.

Dr. Scott's interest in Cashier, unfortunately, did little to improve her deteriorating mental condition. The chief physician of the home, Dr. D. M. Landon, noted in 1913 that Cashier was not only infirm but also

senile. The other doctors at the home concurred that Cashier was too ill, mentally and physically, to be properly cared for at their facility. Acting on their assessment, the superintendent began proceedings to have Cashier declared insane by the State of Illinois, thereby paving the way to remove her from the Soldiers' Home and send her to a mental institution.

About the same time that officials at the home decided to send her away, the news that Albert D. J. Cashier was a woman reached the public. It is not known how, or by whom, the story was initially leaked, but by early 1914, the other residents of the home, the people of Saunemin, Cashier's fellow veterans, and, indeed, the rest of the country were reading about Cashier in the newspapers. Her former neighbors and employers were united in saying that they had never suspected Cashier was not a man, although they agreed that Cashier had always been regarded as a bit of an eccentric. When word reached the Pension Bureau, they appointed a special examiner to investigate the case, convinced that Cashier had defrauded the government for the past twenty-four years.

As news of Cashier's sex reached her friends and former comrades, she received frequent visitors at the home. Some went of their own volition, and others were sent at the behest of the Pension Bureau. Newspaper reporters also descended upon her. Cashier had no idea that her life story was available for public consumption, and the realization that everyone knew her lifelong secret made her feel vulnerable and afraid. In the midst of all the publicity, the officials at the home proceeded with their plan to have her judged insane.

At the February 1914 session of the Adams County Court, the Illinois State Bank of Quincy was appointed conservator of the estate of Albert Cashier. On March 27, 1914, the same court declared that Cashier was indeed insane and committed her to the Watertown State Hospital. The commitment papers noted that "he" was noisy, feeble, an insomniac, and suffering from complete loss of memory. Cashier was delivered to the hospital one day after the hearing. At the same time that Cashier was committed, seven other Civil War veterans and soldiers' home residents were also judged insane by the court and remanded to Watertown because they were "distracted." Cashier's sex was not mentioned in the court proceedings, as all eight of the veterans in question were referred to as male. Of course, given the recent publicity about Cashier, the court certainly knew the truth.

Not much is known about the year-and-a-half that Cashier spent in the

asylum. In June 1914, officials there reported to the Pension Bureau that Cashier was "failing rapidly" and dressed in female attire. Indeed, when Cashier arrived at the facility, she was placed in the women's wing and forced to wear a dress despite her protests. This action on the part of hospital personnel greatly incensed Cashier's former comrades, who could hardly bear to witness the humiliation of one who had once been so fearless. Forcing Cashier to wear long skirts had tragic consequences. She was a frail seventy-year-old who did not know how to walk in such apparel, having worn pants her entire adult life and probably for a good part of her childhood as well. Cashier tripped, fell, and broke her hip. She never recovered from this injury, and spent the rest of her life mostly confined to her bed. Her days in the asylum could not have been happy ones. Nevertheless, in January 1915, Cashier was judged by an asylum doctor to be in fair physical condition and unchanged mental condition.

Her former comrades in the 95th Illinois Infantry rallied around Cashier during her incarceration, and even though they were powerless to change her circumstances or treatment, their support and visits were undoubtedly a comfort to Cashier in her lucid periods. Her most frequent visitor was her former commanding officer, Charles W. Ives. Another veteran, Robert Horan, was vocal in his criticism of Cashier's treatment, believing that the state committed her merely to save money. As far as Cashier's fellow veterans were concerned, her sex was a secondary issue. Once they recovered from the shock of learning she was a woman, and when they realized what was being done to her, they became very protective and solicitous. She was one of them, after all, and her sex did not change their attitude. As one scholar later aptly noted, "No mere matter of sexual identity could efface the valor and fellowship of their comrade Albert Cashier, who had stood in their ranks as a fighting member of the Union Army."

While Cashier was an inmate of the state hospital, and while her comrades and fellow veterans did their best to comfort her, the Pension Bureau continued its investigation into her case. The special examiner contacted former employers, residents of Saunemin, and many veterans of Cashier's regiment. The examiner especially wanted to know if the old soldiers of the 95th Illinois Infantry could positively identify the old woman in the asylum as being the same young person who enlisted in 1862. The universal response was yes. Those men deposed by the special examiner also consistently praised Cashier's performance as a soldier, and everyone swore

that no one ever knew she was a woman during or after the war. The Pension Bureau was also interested in Cashier's mental health, supposing that she must have been insane her entire life. Her comrades disagreed. Eli Brainerd, who served in Cashier's company, said, "His mind seemed to be alright but his actions seemed to be a little funny. I suppose that was because he was a woman." Another compatriot declared, "His mind was alright and he was not simple in anyway." In fact, the only person deposed by the Pension Bureau who thought that Cashier might have been unstable prior to 1913 was one of the Chesbro sisters, who said, "He was always queer and some thought he was half witted."

Depositions were taken until December 1914, when the special examiner decided that Jennie Hodgers was indeed Pvt. Albert D. J. Cashier, that she had not defrauded the government, and that her pension checks would continue. This decision was passed along to a board of review, which declared on February 10, 1915, that "the evidence secured in this case shows beyond any possible doubt that the pensioner is the person who rendered the service. . . . Identity may be accepted." Cashier probably did not care whether or not her pension checks continued. As a ward of the state, she never received them directly anyway.

On October 10, 1915, Albert D. J. Cashier died of an unspecified infection at the Watertown State Hospital. The local chapter of the GAR to which Cashier belonged arranged her funeral. She was buried with full military honors, dressed in her uniform, with the U.S. flag draped over her coffin. Just as the Chesbro sisters wished, the Sunnyslope Cemetery in Saunemin became her final resting place. Cashier's obituary ran in newspapers across the country.

Cashier died intestate. After her burial expenses were paid, there was about $282 left in her estate, and the president of the bank, Mr. Singleton, dutifully tried to find a rightful heir to receive the money. He spent nine years trying to sort out Cashier's past, during which time several purported heirs came forward, but none of them could satisfactorily validate their claims. Cashier's estate finally reverted to the county treasurer. It was little wonder that Mr. Singleton could not find out much about Cashier's past. Many stories circulated about her life and motives, all of them were conflicting, and most of them had been told by Cashier herself.

She was always reticent about her life prior to the war and usually refused to talk about her family. The most popular story about Cashier was that she was born in Ireland in 1844, came to the United States as a ship-

board stowaway, spent some time in the East, and then drifted to Belvedere, arriving before the war dressed as a man. When news of her sex became public, a number of her friends and fellow veterans, as well as the soldiers' home psychiatrist, pressed her for details. She told Charles Ives that she had a twin brother and that when they were growing up in Ireland their mother dressed them both in boy's clothing. She told the Chesbro sisters that she assumed male garb in order to enlist with a lover, who was mortally wounded early in the war. On his deathbed, she told them, he asked his beloved Jennie to stay true to him and never again wear a dress. She told the psychiatrist that she was illegitimate; was born in Clogherhead, Ireland; and as a child worked for her uncle, a sheepherder. She continued by narrating that her mother married a man named Cashier and the family emigrated to New York, where her stepfather dressed her as boy, dubbed her Albert, and found employment for both of them in a shoe factory. When her mother died, she headed west, retaining her identity of Albert Cashier.

Cashier's varied stories cannot be completely attributed to her senility because she had always been evasive on the subject of her personal history and had made a habit of telling conflicting stories about herself long before she entered the soldiers' home. When she enlisted in 1862, she said she was born in New York, but in 1907, she told the Pension Bureau that she was born in Belfast. Cashier clearly wanted to keep private her origins and her reasons for living as she did.

Part of her secret past obviously lay in Ireland. Before her death, Dr. Scott located a man he believed to be a relative of hers, Patrick Hodgers of Clogherhead, Ireland. Descendants of Patrick Hodgers believe they have solved at least part of the mystery of Jennie Hodgers. They discovered a record of her birth, on Christmas Day in 1843, in the parish at Clogherhead. Patrick was recorded as her brother, and there were two more siblings. The facts about how and when she left Ireland, however, are still not known.[17]

Cashier was not the only woman soldier to live as man after the Civil War. In the summer of 1896, a hermit farmer named Otto Schaffer died in Butler County, Kansas, when his cabin was struck by lightening during a severe storm. Neighbors found the body, and the county coroner discovered that Schaffer was a woman. Veterans of the local GAR post gave their deceased comrade a military funeral. Schaffer left considerable property, but no known relatives. Even though Schaffer's story ran in at least one

national newspaper, her female identity and wartime regimental affiliation remain a mystery.[18]

If Otto Schaffer's cabin had not been hit by lightening, and if Albert Cashier had not been run over by a car, probably no one would ever have learned that these two veterans were women. It is entirely possible that Cashier and Schaffer were not anomalous cases. Perhaps other women soldiers also chose to live the rest of their lives as men. During the war, women soldiers "enjoyed a temporary passage into the male world, made acceptable only because of extraordinary historical circumstances," but those male privileges were revoked when the women resumed civilian life after the war. For unmarried working-class women returning home from the army, their only means of support were the same dreary jobs available to them before the war. If they continued to live as men, however, these army veterans could freely work in a number of occupations and draw much higher wages. Furthermore, they could do all manner of things as men that were either forbidden to women or seriously frowned upon. They could open bank accounts, travel anywhere unaccompanied, and exercise the right to vote. Albert Cashier took advantage of all these male privileges. Her neighbors in Saunemin recalled that she had voted in a number of elections in the postwar years.[19]

Recent scholarship suggests "that transvestism . . . [was] not so rare and that there must have been thousands of women wandering around America in the latter part of the nineteenth century . . . who were passing as men." In 1883, a female factory worker was caught, tried, and sentenced to six months in prison for the crime of impersonating a man. Her defense was simple economics. Her employer paid men nine dollars per week, but only paid women four. Women soldiers, having experienced the liberation of living as men, must have been painfully aware of their society's oppression of females when their superior status evaporated with a mere change of clothing. No wonder Cashier and Schaffer chose to remain in pants instead of taking up dresses when they laid aside their uniforms. Other female veterans may have done the same, continuing their private revolt against the constraints placed on them as women.[20]

Of course, female veterans did not have to continue their male masquerade in order to live nontraditionally, but pursuing such a course as a woman was far more difficult. The postwar life of Loreta Velazquez is a good example. When the war ended, she was living in New York, having extricated herself from her connections with the Confederate Secret Ser-

cases of Sarah Edmonds and Albert Cashier. They sent female comrades to their final resting places with full military honors, as evidenced by the funerals of Mary Owens Jenkins, Elizabeth Finnern, and, of course, Albert Cashier. And they never seemed to tire of telling war stories about female soldiers. Well into the twentieth century, veterans' publications routinely supplied stories and anecdotes of encounters with women in uniform. As regiment after regiment published their individual histories, stories of women soldiers were included as a matter of course. As one regimental historian explained, the war was so compelling that even women "were inspired with a desire to share the rougher dangers of the field, and donning male attire were discovered . . . carrying a musket."[24]

Not every former woman soldier was showered with praise by the male veterans, however. In 1895 and 1896, *Confederate Veteran* ran short articles about Malinda Blalock, who served two weeks with the 26th North Carolina Infantry. Both articles recorded "the great amusement of the army" when she revealed her sex and went home. Nearly two years later, when the subject of Blalock once again arose in that magazine, a former Confederate attested that Blalock "did drilling, doing guard and picket duty when she could not frame excuses for avoiding it. It is said she was adept at excuse making." Such derision might well have stemmed from the fact that in the postwar years, Malinda and her husband reached almost legendary status in the mountainous region of their home state, but their fame had nothing to do with supporting the Lost Cause.[25]

When the Blalocks returned home from the southern army in 1862, their pro-Confederate neighbors viewed their lack of enthusiasm for the rebellion dimly, so Malinda and Keith fled into nearby Tennessee and for two years were pro-Union bushwhackers in the Tennessee and North Carolina mountains. On June 1, 1864, Keith enlisted in the 10th Michigan Cavalry under his given name of William and served for the rest of the war as a scout. Malinda dressed as a man and was hired as an unenlisted "independent scout" for the same regiment. When the war was over, they settled in Avery County, North Carolina, and raised four sons. Malinda Blalock died in 1903 at the age of sixty-one. Her husband outlived her by ten years.[26]

A woman named Kate W. Howe, who claimed soldier status, received mixed reviews from the Union veteran community in the postwar years. In 1885, she traveled around the country as an entertainer, claiming to be the granddaughter of the venerable Gen. Winfield Scott. She said that

case was the willingness of his comrades to believe that he was a woman, despite all evidence to the contrary. Perhaps it was due to his short stature and his manner of keeping to himself, traits shared by many of the real women soldiers. The Riley case also illustrates how the perception of a soldier's sex did not change the perception of the individual's service. Riley's comrades praised him as a soldier both before and after they believed he was a woman.[32]

The stories about women soldiers as told by their male compatriots fell into three categories: strictly factual, true stories romantically embellished to comply with Victorian sensibilities, and complete fiction. Of course the stories that male veterans told about themselves and the exploits of their regiments also fell into the same three categories. In the postwar years, the veterans of the Civil War showed a remarkable dedication to keeping alive the memories of all those who fought in the war, and just as they showed remarkable tolerance and respect for women soldiers during the war, they continued to honor them long after the conflict.

The veterans were not alone in their acknowledgments. Just as the literate public devoured stories of female warriors during the war, they continued to read about these women long afterward in books, magazines, and newspapers. The stories of Sarah Edmonds and Albert Cashier graced newspapers across the country. Loreta Velazquez created a sensation with the publication of her memoirs. Obituary columns carried death notices of former women soldiers. Until World War I, national newspapers periodically brought up the subject of distaff warriors in human interest stories, which were oftentimes nothing more than rehashings of columns printed during the war. Additionally, the literary market was flooded in the postwar years with memoirs and regimental histories penned by those who witnessed or participated in the war. These volumes frequently mentioned women soldiers. The reading public was obviously interested in the stories of all participants of the Civil War, male and female.

News stories about women soldiers ranged from anecdotal to apocryphal. Some of the postwar reports were accurate, and others were implausible. The most outlandish account appeared in 1898 in the Charles Town (West Virginia) *Farmer's Advocate.* According to the article, Mary Walters enlisted in a Michigan regiment to be with her husband, although he had no knowledge of her actions. She stayed in the service until he failed to return from a scouting expedition, whereupon she "applied for her discharge and returned to her Michigan home." She never believed, however,

suddenly learned that one of their own, whom they thought was a man, was actually a woman.[6]

At the close of the Civil War centennial, the view presented of women who shouldered a musket was very dim. "Many a romantic girl dreamed of being a second Joan of Arc, but those who actually entered the ranks by posing as men were usually viewed by contemporaries as mentally unbalanced or immoral," wrote Mary Elizabeth Massey in the now-classic *Bonnet Brigades.* Of all the twentieth-century historians who considered women soldiers, Massey was the most negative. Unfortunately, her views of women soldiers have been widely accepted because her work, republished in the 1990s as *Women in the Civil War*, remains the most exhaustive survey of women's participation at large. Massey proclaimed that newspaper stories about women in the ranks "evidence their determination, pathetically illustrate the effects of their unconventional behavior, and raise doubts about the individual." Furthermore, Massey recorded instances of two of the women who were not discovered until they delivered babies and took this as proof that "many and probably most of the women soldiers were prostitutes or concubines," while failing to mention that a primary motivation for many women to join the military service was to stay by the side of their husbands.[7]

In his classic studies of the common soldier of the Civil War, the venerable Bell Irvin Wiley correctly pointed out that many women soldiers went to war with their husbands, but he was quick to add that "the motive of some who laid aside skirts for uniforms was immoral." Based on a small number of cases, Wiley decided that "probably the majority of women who entered the ranks in male disguise were respectable characters, motivated by patriotism or the desire to be near husbands or sweethearts," but believed that there were also women who "were persons of easy virtue who enrolled as soldiers to further their lewd enterprises." Wiley also alleged that "usually their sex was soon detected and they were sent home," although most of the women soldiers cited in his works served for long periods of time without discovery.[8]

In all fairness to Simkins and Patton, Wiley, Massey, and Young, at least these scholars mentioned women soldiers. The majority of works published from the 1930s to the 1980s make no such references. With the notable exceptions of Sarah Edmonds and Albert Cashier, whose lives and service were so overwhelmingly documented and publicized that it was impossible to ignore them, the rest of the women soldiers of the Civil War